

World

Womens' conference calls for official organization

By NORA BRIANT

The first conference ever, for New Brunswick women was held at Memramcook Institute October 25 and 27. More than 250 people (mostly women with a handful of men) registered at the desk and wound through the maze of hallways and meeting rooms to the fifth floor where Dr. Katie Cooke, Chairperson of the National Advisory Council of the Status of Women gave some introductory remarks.

Dr. Cooke gave her audience some of her spark and spirit while asking what direction women would take. New Brunswick has no official body concerned with women's affairs while six other provinces have advisory councils of some sort. She stressed that women must make their views known. Women as individuals as well as, as groups must push for legislation in International Women's Year 1975.

Marked differences in the personalities and groups represented gave some interest to the panel discussion. Panelists were Blanche Bourgeois, New Brunswick Representative of National Advisory Council on the Status of Women; Aldea Landry, lawyer and member of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission; Dorothy Power-Lawson, President, Moncton and District Labour Council and Madeline LeBlanc, journalist with CBAFT Moncton.

The messages of each were generally the same. Women must work together and must strive to be heard where decisions are being made. An official organization with a full time staff is called for.

Workshops held in both English and French that tried to get down to the nitty gritty issues seemed to lack the grit in many cases. The topics were numerous and varied. A list of the topics covered follows:

- Saturday, Conditions of Work-Health Care System (Femme au Travail - Recyclage des Femmes); 1. Sexism in Children's Books - Women and Money - Video (Education et Sensibilisation des Enfants - La Femme dans l'Administration); 2. Women and Welfare (l'Assistance Sociale); 3. The Day Care Situation - Women as Artists (Garderies et Maternelles - La Femme dans la vie publique); 4. Single Parents (Le Parent Celibataire - Les Possibilites de Travail).
- Sunday - How to Organize - 1. Status of Women Councils; 2. International Women's Year; 3. Day Care Centres; 4. Women's Centres; 5. Unions; 6. Video Taping; 7. Consciousness Raising Groups; 8. Women's Studies; 9. Public Office; 10. Organizing Skills.

Many participants commented that the time was too short (1-1½ hours per topic). Topics were presented and discussed but little time was available for problem solving.

Saturday evening Ms. Fiona Hyslop of the International Women's Year Secretariat, Privy Council of Canada spoke on International Women's Year. In this unexciting address, people heard that the Secretariat which Ms. Hyslop represented had a budget of just over two million dollars. This money was to be spent primarily in two areas: an intensive general awareness program to make all Canadians rethink their current attitudes towards women and women's rights; and, to encourage the uninvolved to become involved.

The Secretary of State Department will have one million dollars for extra funds for women's projects for 1975, in addition to regular grants for women's projects.

After speaking, Ms. Hyslop was pressed for more details on the "general awareness" and "involvement" programs. She explained that the specifics would be arranged according to regional needs. Representatives have been appointed to work with the secretariat in planning regional conferences. The audience reacted with surprise and anger that nothing had been heard publicly about such an appointment. The New Brunswick Representative is Ms. Nancy Bryan, Secretary, Interdepartmental Committee on the Role of Women. Several hostile question and comments were directed at Ms. Bryan questioning how the appointment was made. She answered them quietly, inadequately and in English only.

Dr. Alcoe, Faculty of Nursing, UNB, then pointed out that the audience's criticism was misdirected. Ms. Bryan had merely accepted the appointment which was given her as a part of her job. It was decided that an informal group would meet after to write a letter to Premier Hatfield criticizing the method of appointment. The next day at the concluding session, a motion was made and passed to send the following letter to Premier Hatfield:

"Whereas delegates of the New Directions for New Brunswick Women were informed that the appointment of a provincial representative had been requested by the Government of Canada to be appointed by the Premier of N.B. to act as a liaison with regard to an Atlantic Regional Conference for International Women's Year 1975. And whereas the women of N.B. had not been informed of the appointment, nor their opinions

requested on the Federally Sponsored Atlantic Regional Conference

whereas the delegates of the New Directions for New Brunswick Women are appalled at this lack of communication and the Premier's apparent lack of concern for Women's representation in the planning for International Women's Year

The delegates of New Directions for New Brunswick Women recommend to the provincial government that the necessary resources be made available to ensure adequate communication between the women of New Brunswick and the provincial representative appointed to work with the International Women's Year Secretariat in planning the Atlantic Regional Conference."

Also in the concluding session a dozen women were elected to act as a temporary lobby, presenting this criticism to the government.

The co-chairpeople are Corine Gallant and Dorothy Power-Lawson. The resolutions from the workshops were given to this lobby to present as issues which should be under the purview of a badly needed Status of Women Advisory Council.

Technical problems nagged at the organizers throughout the conference. Equipment for amplifying voices was not available and the audience was larger than expected. The first morning not enough translating devices were available. Perhaps most disrupting of all was the lack of facilities for mimeographing the resolutions coming out of the workshops for all to read.

Jackie Good, one member of the organizing committee and coordinator of the program on Saturday and Sunday was pleased with the result. She felt that most

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